



## Introduction

Understanding architecture is too often obscured by two extremes. First, there is the definition provided by the profession, much of which focuses upon the financial, legal, and technical problems to be solved and quantified. Second, there are the questions asked by the philosopher: is architecture an art, a science, a language, or indeed a necessity? While these concerns are extremely important, it is also worth noting that most educated adults in our culture *know* intuitively what architecture is about and suffer only from inhibitions and lost opportunities to express or enrich that knowledge.

The Fellows in “Elements of Architecture,” whose middle and high school teaching ranges from art and math to social studies and literature, exhibited a truly remarkable sense of architecture. Even more significantly they devised means of conveying that sensibility to their young students under teaching conditions which at first seemed to be appalling, i.e. limits on books, time, space, materials, literacy, and for some students an insufficient architectural legacy. Yet with scissors, yarn, cardboard, poems, and polyhedra, as well as projected excursions into the streets of New Haven, they managed to devise curriculum units that had more bounce than one often comes to expect from the studios of the average professional architecture school. One Fellow will require her students to observe polygons in settings ranging from kitchen sinks to steeples, while another will ask his students to map space while blindfolded. Others will have their students experience architecture through the minds and spirits of real and mythical persons ranging from the historic moguls of New Haven to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice Through the Looking Glass* . Two units required elaborate models as final projects, one of the Parthenon and another of a functioning dollhouse.

All the Fellows realized that architecture was a cultural expression of life beginning with the body and going on to claim the landscape with buildings, markers, and gardens. They seemed also to realize that activity as a birthright within our culture, and one which they could illuminate in the classrooms of New Haven, in a broad variety of age-groups and persuasions.

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